

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel claim 32, 39 and 40 without prejudice or disclaimer.

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A flexible sheet structure comprising:

a plurality of modules ~~connected together;~~

said plurality of modules being connected together so that each module of said plurality of modules is capable of rotating about first and second axes with respect to a neighbouring neighboring module of said plurality of modules to which it is connected, said first axis being parallel to the plane of the sheet when laid flat and said second axis being orthogonal to the plane of the sheet when laid flat;

wherein an area of said sheet can be reduced to 80% or less of its original size, while remaining flat.

2. (Currently Amended) A flexible sheet structure according to claim 1, wherein a module of said plurality of modules can rotate relative to a neighbouring neighboring module of said plurality of modules to which it-said module is connected about said axis parallel to the plane of the sheet when laid flat through at least the full range of -10° to +10°.

3. (Original) A flexible sheet structure according to claim 2, wherein said rotation is at least through the full range of -20° to +20°.

4. (Currently Amended) A flexible sheet structure according to claim 3, wherein a module of said plurality of modules can rotate relative to a neighbouring neighboring module of said plurality of modules to which it-said module is connected about said axis parallel to the plane of the sheet when laid flat by between no more than -60° and no more than +60°.

5. (Original) A flexible sheet structure according to claim 4, wherein said rotation is between no more than -30° and no more than +30°.

6. (Currently Amended) A flexible sheet structure according to -claim 1, wherein a module of said plurality of modules can rotate relative to a ~~neighbouring~~-neighboring module of said plurality of modules to which ~~it~~-said module is connected about said axis orthogonal to the plane of the sheet when laid flat through at least the full range of -10° to +10°.

7. (Original) A flexible sheet structure according to claim 6, wherein said rotation is at least through the full range of -30° to +30°.

8. (Original) A flexible sheet structure according to claim 7, wherein said rotation is at least through the full range of -80° to +80°.

9. (Currently Amended) A flexible sheet structure according to -claim 1, wherein each module of said plurality of modules has a plurality of nodes and at least one of said modules has each of its plurality of nodes connected to a node of a different ~~neighbouring~~-neighboring module.

10. (Currently Amended) A flexible sheet structure according to claim 9, wherein each module of said plurality of modules has 3 and only 3 nodes.

11. (Withdrawn) A flexible sheet structure according to claim 9, wherein each module has 4 and only 4 nodes.

12. (Currently Amended) A flexible sheet structure according to claim 10, wherein each node is located at ~~the~~-an end of an arm.

13. (Currently Amended) A flexible sheet structure according to claim 12, wherein each arm of ~~the~~-each module lies parallel to the plane of the sheet when laid flat.

14. (Currently Amended) A flexible sheet structure according to -claim 9, wherein each ~~nodal~~ connection between respective ones of said plurality of modules is a single joint that allows both said rotation orthogonal to the plane of the sheet when laid flat and said rotation parallel to the plane of the sheet when laid flat, ~~preferably~~ simultaneously such that rotation about a single axis intermediate said orthogonal and parallel axes is possible.

15. (Original) A flexible sheet structure according to claim 14, wherein said single joint has a neutral axis oriented at substantially 90° to the plane of the sheet when laid flat.

16. (Withdrawn) A flexible sheet structure according to claim 14, wherein said single joint has a neutral axis oriented at an angle to the plane of the sheet when laid flat.

17. (Withdrawn) A flexible sheet structure according to claim 14, wherein said single joint has a neutral axis oriented substantially parallel to the plane of the sheet when laid flat.

18. (Currently Amended) A flexible sheet structure according to claim 14, wherein said single joint is a ball/and socket joint.

19. (Withdrawn) A flexible sheet structure according to claim 18, wherein said ball/socket joint is a double ended ball/socket joint comprising two balls and two sockets.

20. (Withdrawn) A flexible sheet structure according to claim 1, wherein a module can rotate relative to a neighbouring module to which it is directly or indirectly connected about said axis parallel to the plane of the sheet when laid flat by between at least the full range of -90° to +90°.

21. (Withdrawn) A flexible sheet structure according to claim 20, wherein a module can rotate relative to a neighbouring module to which it is directly or indirectly connected about said axis parallel to the plane of the sheet when laid flat by between at least the full range of -180° to +180°.

22. (Withdrawn) A flexible sheet structure according to claim 20, wherein a module can rotate relative to a neighbouring module to which it is directly or indirectly connected about said axis orthogonal to the plane of the sheet when laid flat by at least between -100° and +100°.

23. (Withdrawn) A flexible sheet structure according to claim 22, wherein a module can rotate relative to a neighbouring module to which it is directly or indirectly connected about said axis parallel to the plane of the sheet when laid flat by between no more than -120° and no more than +120°.

24. (Withdrawn) A flexible sheet structure according to claim 1, wherein at least one module of said sheet is connected to a neighbouring module via a linking component.

25. (Withdrawn) A flexible sheet structure according to claim 24, wherein said at least one module is connected to said linking component by a joint which allows relative rotation between the module and linking component about said axis parallel to the plane of the sheet when laid flat.

26. (Withdrawn) A flexible sheet structure according to claim 25, wherein said linking component comprises two members connected together by a joint which allows relative rotation between the two members about an axis orthogonal to the plane of the sheet when laid flat.

27. (Withdrawn) A flexible sheet structure according to claim 24, wherein each module is connected to a linking component by a joint which allows relative rotation between the module and the linking component about said axis orthogonal to the plane of the sheet when laid flat.

28. (Withdrawn) A flexible sheet structure according to claim 24, wherein said linking component is a single linear member having a ball at each end thereof.

29. (Currently Amended) A flexible sheet structure according to claim 1, wherein ~~the modules and optional linking components~~ said plurality of modules are connected together so as to form a regular pattern of closed loops in said plane.

30. (Currently Amended) A flexible sheet structure according to claim 29, wherein the loops can close in to reduce in area while the sheet remains flat due to relative rotation of said plurality of modules about said axis orthogonal to the plane of the sheet when laid flat.

31. (Currently Amended) A flexible sheet structure according to -claim 1, wherein the effective area of the whole or part of the sheet can be varied while the sheet remains flat.

32. (Canceled)

33. (Currently Amended) A flexible sheet structure according to claim 341, wherein the area of said sheet can be reduced to 60% or less of its original size, while remaining flat.

34. (Currently Amended) A flexible sheet structure according to claim 341, wherein the area of said sheet can be reduced to 40% or less of its original size, while remaining flat.

35. (Currently Amended) A flexible sheet structure according to -claim 1, wherein each module of said plurality of modules is capable of rotating relative to a ~~neighbouring~~ neighboring module of said plurality of modules to which it is connected about each of the mutually orthogonal axes that lie in the plane of the sheet when laid flat.

36. (Currently Amended) A flexible sheet structure according to -claim 9, wherein each module of said plurality of modules is connected to a plurality of ~~neighbouring~~ neighboring modules of said plurality of modules.

37. (Currently Amended) A flexible sheet structure comprising:

a plurality of modules connected together, at least one of said modules being connected to another of said module-modules by a multiple degree of freedom joint that has a neutral axis oriented substantially at 90° to the plane of the sheet when laid flat;
wherein an area of said sheet can be reduced to 80% or less of its original size, while remaining flat.

38. (Currently Amended) A flexible sheet structure according to claim 37, wherein each of said module of the sheet-modules is connected to another module-of said modules by a multiple degree of freedom joint that has a neutral axis oriented substantially at 90° to the plane of the sheet when laid flat.

39-40. (Canceled)

41. (Currently Amended) A flexible sheet structure comprising:
a plurality of modules connected together, each of said modules having first, second and third arms, each of said arms being regularly spaced from the other two said arms, each of said arm-arms being connected to an arm of a neighbouring neighboring one of said module-modules so that each module of the sheet-of said modules is capable of rotating with respect to its neighbouring neighboring module of said plurality of modules about an axis orthogonal to the plane of the sheet when laid flat;

wherein an area of said sheet can be reduced to 80% or less of its original size, while remaining flat.

42. (Currently Amended) A flexible sheet structure according to -claim 1, wherein each module of said plurality of modules is constructed of substantially rigid and non-flexible plastics material.

43. (Currently Amended) A flexible sheet structure according to -claim 1, wherein the connections between said plurality of modules are arranged such that pure relative translation between neighbouring neighboring modules of said plurality of modules is not possible.

44. (Currently Amended) A flexible sheet structure according to -claim 1, wherein each module in the sheet of said plurality of modules is substantially similar in shape to the other modules of the sheet.

45. (Currently Amended) A flexible street structure comprising:
a plurality of modules ~~connected together~~;
said plurality of modules being connected together so as to allow ~~the~~an effective area of the sheet to be varied while the sheet remains flat and to allow out of plane movement so that the sheet may be smoothly conformed around complex shapes;

wherein an area of said sheet can be reduced to 80% or less of its original size, while remaining flat.

46. (Currently Amended) A flexible sheet structure according to -claim 1, further comprising additional material applied so as to give a smooth outer surface for said sheet structure.

47. (Original) A flexible sheet structure according to claim 46, wherein said additional material is a thin covering material adhered to the plurality of modules.

48. (Original) A flexible sheet structure according to claim 46, wherein said additional material is applied as a fluid so as to encapsulate the plurality of modules.

49. (Currently Amended) A module for use in the flexible sheet structure of -claim 1.

50. (Currently Amended) A module for use in a flexible sheet structure, said module having arms with each arm comprising one half of a multiple degree of freedom joint, for

connection with the other half of the multiple degree of freedom joint located on an arm of a neighbouring neighboring module in the sheet, said multiple degree of freedom joint half being oriented such that the-a resulting multiple degree of freedom joint will have a neutral axis oriented out of the-a plane of the sheet when flat;

wherein the area of a sheet made from a plurality of said modules can be reduced to 80% or less of its original size, while remaining flat.

51. (Currently Amended) A module according to claim 50, wherein said multiple degree of freedom joint half is oriented at 90° to the-a major plane of the module.

52. (Previously Presented) A module according to claim 51, wherein said multiple degree of freedom joint half is one of a ball and a socket.

53. (Currently Amended) A lockable articulated structure comprising:
a plurality of modules connected together so that said modules are selectively moveable with respect to one another;

at least one connection between two of said modules comprising a locking material capable of assuming at least two states, said at least two states including a first state which allows relative movement of said eomponents modules and a second state which at least substantially prevents such movement, a transition between said two states being accomplished by the-a selective introduction of energy to said locking material;

wherein an area of said sheet can be reduced to 80% or less of its original size, while remaining flat.

54. (Original) A structure according to claim 53, wherein said selective movement is rotation.

55. (Original) A structure according to claim 54, wherein said rotation is about more than one axis.

56. (Previously Presented) A structure according to claim 53, wherein said first state is a softer state than said second state.

57. (Original) A structure according to claim 56, wherein said second state is a frozen state.

58. (Currently Amended) A structure according to claim 57, wherein said transition is from said frozen state to said soft-softer state and is accomplished by providing heat to said locking material.

59. (Currently Amended) A structure according to claim 58, wherein said locking material is susceptible of being heated by microwave energy to a greater extent than the material of the articulated structure such that heat may be provided to said locking material by subjecting the whole-articulated structure to microwave radiation.

60. (Previously Presented) A structure according to claim 53, wherein said first state is an expanded state and said second state is a compressed state.

61. (Previously Presented) A structure according to claim 53, wherein said first state is a compressed state and said second state is an expanded state.

62. (Previously Presented) A structure according to claim 60, wherein said transition is from said compressed state to said expanded state and is accomplished by providing heat or electricity to said locking material.

63. (Previously Presented) A structure according to claim 53, wherein said first state is a non-adhered state and said second state is an adhered state.

64. (Original) A structure according to claim 63, wherein said transition is from said non-adhered state to said adhered state and is accomplished by providing heat, UV radiation or electricity to said connection.

65. (Currently Amended) A structure according to claim 53, wherein said first state is a pressurised-pressurized state and said second state is a unpressurised-an unpressurized or less pressurised-pressurized state.

66. (Currently Amended) A structure according to claim 65, wherein said transition is from said unpressurised-unpressurized or less pressurised-pressurized state to said pressurised-pressurized state and is accomplished by pumping a hydraulic or pneumatic fluid through said connection.

67. (Currently Amended) A structure according to -claim 53, wherein said transition is reversible.

68. (Currently Amended) A structure according to -claim 53, wherein said connection is a ball-andsocket joint and said locking material is disposed at least partly around the ball.

69. (Currently Amended) A structure according to claim 68, wherein at least one of said ball and/orand said socket has a flat portion, and said locking material is located adjacent said flat portion.

70. (Currently Amended) A structure according to claim 68, wherein there are provided topographical features that prevent rotation about thea neutral axis of said ball-andsocket joint when said structure is locked.

71. (Currently Amended) A structure according to claim 70, wherein said ball or socket has at least one or more groove-shaped topographical features-feature in which said locking material is located.

72. (Withdrawn) A structure according to claim 53, wherein said connection is a pivot comprising a shaft part and an annular part.

73. (Withdrawn) A structure according to claim 72, wherein said locking material is located between said shaft part and said annular part.

74. (Withdrawn) A structure according to claim 73, wherein said shaft or annular part has a non-cylindrical face and said locking material is located adjacent said face.

75. (Currently Amended) A structure according to -claim 53, wherein said material is a thermoplastic material.

76. (Currently Amended) A structure according to -claim 53, wherein said material is a eutectic material.

77. (Currently Amended) A structure according to -claim 53, wherein said material is a thermosetting material.

78. (Currently Amended) A structure according to -claim 53, where said material is a polymer.

79. (Currently Amended) A structure according to -claim 53, wherein said material is a thixotropic fluid or a rheopectic fluid so as to provide differing amounts of effective viscosity according to the level of force acting on the structure.

80. (Currently Amended) A flexible sheet structure comprising the lockable articulated structure of -claim 53.

81-82. (Cancelled)

83. (Currently Amended) A spinal brace comprising the flexible sheet structure of ~~any~~ one of claim 1.

84. (New) A structure according to claim 53, wherein said transition is from said non-adhered state to said adhered state and is accomplished by providing electromagnetic radiation to said connection.